

IST INITIATIVE

**PRESENTATION TO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN
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Instructional Support Team Initiative Presentation to the Board of Education October 16, 2002

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WHAT IS THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TEAM INITIATIVE?

- ❖ The Instructional Support Team (IST) initiative is designed to improve student achievement based on instructionally relevant assessment practices.
 - In Pennsylvania, where it was initially implemented, schools using the IST model effectively reduced special education referrals and grade retentions by focusing on the instructional needs of students rather than on perceived internal deficiencies.
- ❖ The success of the IST model stems from
 - Significant staff development: traditional staff development augmented by modeling for and coaching classroom teachers
 - Instructionally-relevant student assessment strategies
 - Use of an IST teacher and team who receive extensive training in consultation, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- ❖ Teachers concerned about a student work with the IST teacher, or another member of the IST Team,
 - to gather information about student strengths and needs
 - identify change goals
 - design strategies for reaching those goals
 - monitor implementation of strategies and make necessary adjustments
- ❖ The IST teacher/team member may go into the teacher's classroom for further assistance via modeling, co-teaching, or coaching.
- ❖ Immediate action is taken to support the student and teacher.
- ❖ Based on data, provide staff development to groups of teachers.

WHAT IS THE VIRGINIA INITIATIVE?

- ❖ Virginia included IST as a component of its Special Education State Improvement Grant, funded by USDOE (1999-2004).
 - VDOE partially funds the cost of an IST teacher for four years and provides for all training for IST site personnel.
- ❖ Objectives of Virginia Initiative
 - Develop an infrastructure of model IST school sites in all eight regions.
 - Develop a systematic support network within each school, including a trained IST teacher and trained teams.
 - Enhance all teachers' skills in and application of best practices of instructional assessment and interventions with students.
 - Develop school-wide principles of collaboration and problem solving among teachers.
 - Use student data for classroom and school decisions.
 - Develop an infrastructure of skilled IST consultants within Virginia, specifically at the Training and Technical Assistance Centers at Virginia universities.
- ❖ Three phases of implementation
 - I. Introduction of the IST model to schools and initial training of IST teacher and team (year 1).
 - IST teacher: IST teachers receive 25 days of training in:
 - Instructionally relevant assessment
 - Effective teaching strategies in core subjects of reading and math
 - Functional behavior assessment practices
 - Team development approaches.
 - Team development: IST Teams also serve as case managers and receive comparable training.

II. Training and implementation of IST instructional assessment and instructional consultation, facilitated by school's IST teacher (year 2).

III. Continued implementation, maintenance and evaluation (years 3 and after).

❖ 13 IST Sites are funded through the State Improvement Grant.

- Cohort One: 1999
 - Surry Elementary, Surry County
 - Byrd Elementary, Goochland County
- Cohort Two: 2000
 - Amelia Elementary, Amelia County
 - Chase City Elementary, Mecklenburg County
 - West Point Elementary, West Point
 - Acquinton Elementary, King William County
 - Lee-Jackson Elementary, Matthews County
- Cohort 3: 2001
 - Apple Pie Ridge Elementary, Frederick County
 - Boyce Elementary, Clarke County
 - Seatack Elementary, Virginia Beach
 - Oceanair Elementary, Norfolk
- Cohort 4: 2002
 - Fallon Park Elementary, Roanoke City
 - Riverlawn Elementary, Pulaski County.

RESULTS

- ❖ “What a breath of fresh air! I have seen too many teachers in the past use the special education referral system as an “easy out,” instead of addressing student problems from an instructional point of view. Use of IST improves classroom instruction and student behavior.” Elementary Principal
- ❖ Referral and retention
 - Reduction in referrals for special education evaluation
 - Average of 47%, as high as 63% reduction
 - Significant potential for cost savings as the average cost to educate a child in special education is twice the cost of educating a student without a disability (\$13,408 vs. \$6,632 in 2000-01).
 - Reduction in grade retention
 - 72% and 89% in 2 sites
- ❖ Student Goals
 - Reading goals met: 79%
 - Math goals met: 84%
 - Writing goals met: 79%
- ❖ Reduction in disciplinary referrals
- ❖ Decrease in requests to counselors to work with students on social skills
- ❖ 96% of teachers report implementing newly learned strategies with other students, in addition to those referred to the team
- ❖ One school division was so impressed with the results it decided to use local funds to put additional Instructional Support Teams in its other elementary schools.

NEXT STEPS

- ❖ Continued support of cohorts 1 and 2, in the institutionalization phase
 - Staff development tailored to specific school needs
- ❖ Support for cohort 3 in maintenance phase
- ❖ Training of cohort 4 in start-up phase

USDOE GRANT APPLICATION: 2002

- ❖ Expand IST to include 12 additional sites.
- ❖ Focus on schools accredited with warning for the second time with deficiencies in curriculum alignment.
- ❖ Create standardized training package.
- ❖ Train university-based Training/Technical Assistance Centers to provide training and on-site consultation.
- ❖ Add cultural competency training for sites with disproportionate identification of minority students as eligible for special education.
- ❖ Train university faculty in IST assessment approaches.

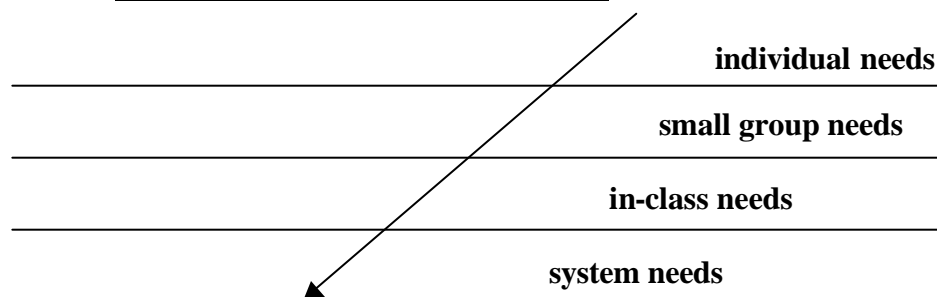
Ms. Julia Harper's Materials

Scaffolding System of Support/Continued Training

Students
?
Classroom Teachers
?
Instructional Support Team Members
?
Instructional Support Teacher
?
Internal Facilitators
?
External Facilitators

Julia P. Harper
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Continuum of IST Services



Staff Development Statistics

(2nd full year of implementation)

577 teacher contacts

32 training sessions

47 modeling sessions

Methods of Staff Development

Strategy Sharing

Embedded Staff Development

Small Group Staff Development

Newsletters

Faculty Project Compilations

Resource Library

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Ms. Carolyn Bowman's Materials

Mecklenburg County Public Schools

Carol Bowman

The Instructional Support team (IST) became an essential part of Chase City Elementary School in December 2000. Our school is located in rural southside Virginia with 525 students and a faculty of 32 classroom teachers. Sixty-four and one-half percent of our students receive free or reduced lunches and the area has an unemployment rate of 11.3% with a per capita average income of \$10,577.

Our school applied for the grant from the Virginia Department of Education to establish an IST at Chase City Elementary School because we had one of the highest referral rates for special education services in Mecklenburg County Public Schools. Not only was the school administration and staff concerned about the referral rate, there were questions about the quality of the referrals. Many students were found ineligible for services after completing the lengthy evaluation process.

With implementation of the IST, there were several changes in referral patterns. Total referrals for special education testing dropped from 49-28 in the first full year of implementation of the IST. Referrals by teachers for testing dropped from 24 in 2000-2001 to three in 2001-2002. Ten of those referrals did not qualify for services, but all three referrals in 2001-2002 were valid ones (resulted in special education placements). Preventing referrals of students who do not qualify represents a saving of time, money and emotions as students, parents, teachers, and other professionals participate in an assessment process covering a significant time period.

Last year, 50% of our teachers request assistance from the team with representation from each of our grades (kindergarten through grade five.) Team members believe that they impacted the teaching strategies of nearly 100% of our

teaching staff as the teachers who used IST services met in grade group throughout the school year and shared strategies introduced to them by their IST case managers IST developed strategies to assist teachers with such skills as:

- phonetic awareness
- spelling
- reading comprehension
- vocabulary
- homework skills
- number sense
- computational skills
- fluency
- self-control

Also, the IST wrote 90 goals, identified progress by students working on 94% (84 of 90) of those goals, and determined that 83% (75 of 90) of the goals were met or exceeded.

As school staff members look to the new standards inherent in the NO Child Left Behind initiative, the value of an IST program becomes even more significant, several of its key features are highlighted, and observations about its impact are recalled. To mention a few features and observations:

- IST gives teachers another place to look for solutions for students having academic difficulties in their classroom. It empowers them to seek out answers to challenging questions, collaborate with professional, validate their concerns, and problem solve in a non-evaluative environment. Teachers take ownership of the problems the students are having and search for ways of meeting the individual needs of the students.
- More teachers are taking advantage of the program as they discover that is not considered a weakness to ask for assistance, but rather a show of concern for each child in a classroom. As soon as a teacher realizes that a student is falling behind in a particular skill, a request for assistance puts a

team of professionals at his or her disposal to help assess the learning situation and develop strategies ensure that all skills are mastered.

- Last year we had a 10-year-old student who was repeating fourth grade because of math deficiencies. Also, he had failed at the third grade level. Together, the teacher, case manager, and team were able to develop strategies that not only allowed him to pass math, but it also gave him the confidence to feel that he could be successful in math. When a child realizes that a whole group of teachers are providing support and are cheering on every step of success, it motivates that child to achieve. It also provided the classroom teacher with new strategies that could be used with individual students or the entire class
- As the team identified recurring training needs, staff development is planned to meet them. Administration is not better able to identify and prioritize needs, and to focus time and funds on them.

Recently, Mecklenburg County Public Schools had a change in its highest administrative position. Dr. Polakiewicz became the new school superintendent this past school year. He is a strong supporter of Instructional Support Teams and feels that an IST initiative in Mecklenburg County Public Schools, a new teacher has taken over my IST position at Chase City Elementary School and I have been given the task of spreading this team approach to instructional consultation to other schools in our division.. A core belief of our school division is that it is important for teachers to collaborate and share the skills they have brought to their profession.

In closing, a few responses to the central implementation question: What makes an IST such an effective service? IST is a dynamic, data-driven program that enhances, increases, and improves both staff and student competencies. It focuses on what a child can do and builds on those skills. An IST responds quickly to teachers with concerns providing a diverse array of services including coaching on implementation of interventions, and, most importantly, it accommodates the student within the regular classroom rather than in another setting. Furthermore, it helps schools to avoid making misdiagnoses of student disabilities and incurring costly special education evaluations while enabling personnel to reallocate their efforts to intervention work.

With a faculty willing to facilitate change when strategies are grounded in data collection and processing, the IST has helped Chase City Elementary School develop a vision of sharing, growing, and succeeding together. We are fully accredited and believe that the development of the IST has played an important role in achieving that goal.